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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON CAFTA, JULY 27, 2005

1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" entitled "At Stake." For the Bush administration, more than a commercial treaty that will have little immediate effect on the North American economy, what is at stake [in the vote on CAFTA] is the President's image in Latin American nations, his commercial policy throughout the hemisphere and the Administration's agenda in Congress."

"If he can't get CAFTA through Congress, it will be difficult for him to get support on other issues that require legislative approval, and the Administration will have a lot of difficulties for the rest of the second term. That is why President Bush is personally negotiating with Congressmen and using all his political influence and presidential power to achieve a favorable vote."

"All of the recent statements about CAFTA-DR, especially from the Salvadoran president, have been made for the benefit of the undecided Congressmen. In a matter of hours, it should all be over."

2. Op-ed by Saul Hernandez Bolivar in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "La Prensa" entitled "CAFTA is not the Problem." "This may help explain why the country doesn't grow at the pace it should. There are obstacles: a culture of dependency that gets in the way of business, the lack of infrastructure, and a lot of donated fish but few lessons in fishing."

"The traditional and leftist parties, enemies of FTA, should be proposing ways to stimulate development in border and coastal areas and to optimize infrastructure, etc. and stop wasting time on issues such as elections. The problem is not CAFTA, it is the lack of vision that has stopped us from going forward because we don't have a strategy."

Tuebner